A Previous Entanglement

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A Previous Entanglement

by DBMars

Summary

A year before the events of "Aperitif," Will and Hannibal meet in a Baltimore park and develop a relationship. When it turns sexual, Will insists it remain a secret. When Hannibal gets a call from Jack Crawford, asking him to keep psychological tabs on Will (just like in the show), Hannibal shows up to that first meeting to teach Will a lesson about keeping secrets. Will walks into Jack's office not knowing his secret boyfriend is going to be there...

Dog Day Afternoon

April 4 th , 2012

"Buster, no!" Will wasn't sure how the small dog, usually dumber than a box of rocks, had gotten off his lead while Will had been distracted with Zoe's sudden limp. Luckily, the only other dog with him was Jack, who was well trained and sharply obedient. Will scooped up Zoe and hurried after Buster, who was tearing across the muddy grass, stopping only to put his paws on the edge of a baby's stroller to glance within before dashing off again. To Will's relief, the mother and child laughed delightedly at the dog's antics.

"Buster, damn it! Stay! Buster, *stay!* " Buster paused and sat, deciding that *now* he could hear Will's commands. But as Will approached, Zoe whimpering in his arms, Buster seemed to give him a doggy smirk, tongue lolling, eyes wild. He raced off again toward the edge of Canton Waterfront Park, determined, perhaps, to take a swim. Buster was the newest addition to Will's pack, and he was starting to think the reason the little mutt had been left at the shelter wasn't because his previous owner had married someone with a dog allergy; he'd probably been dropped off there because he was a cheeky little shit.

And why the fuck was he so fast on those stubby legs? Will followed as best he could, clutching Zoe, trying not to jostle her. Jack trotted diligently at his side, trailing Buster's lead in his mouth. Buster tore ass across a stretch of soggy grass, flinging up turf, then crossed onto a drier patch. He was headed straight for a man in an azure three-piece suit. The stranger was standing in front of a stone pedestal with a bronze bust on the top, studying the inscription memorializing Wilbur C. Miller, hero cop of Baltimore. Unaware it seemed, of the approaching whirlwind of mud and doggy delight.

"No, no, no, no–! Hey, look out!" Will pleaded, but it was too late. Buster jumped up delightedly against the man's leg with his muddy paws, leaving at least one defined wet print on his thigh. The man turned, surprised, a look of mild annoyance crossing his features. It melted away when he caught sight of Will hurrying along with Zoe in his arms, and was replaced with a bemused smile.

"I'm so sorry," Will said by way of greeting. "She's, uh, she started limping, and I-I dunno how he got out–"

"May I?" the man set down his briefcase and held out his arms. Will looked down at them stupidly for a moment. "While you secure him?"

Will didn't have time to think it through. Buster was headed for the waterfront, and if he decided to go for a swim, this disaster would only compound itself. Will deposited Zoe in the stranger's arms and ordered Jack to drop the leash, and then to stay, knowing he'd plop down obediently and not move until Will returned.

At last, Will caught up with Buster on the rocks that lined the water's edge where he was excitedly sniffing a discarded squeeze pouch of applesauce. He snagged Buster's collar and re-attached the lead, scolding him until the little dog put his tail between his legs and followed Will back to the man in the suit. Suit guy was cradling Zoe like a baby now, running his fingers along her belly as she snuffled contentedly, leaning up now to try and lick his face.

Will winced. There was dog hair on the suit now, too, and the entire ensemble looked expensive as hell. Pale cream shirt, champagne tie, fucking pocket square. The man glanced up at him and they locked eyes, just for a moment. Will had an otherworldly feeling like he was falling into them, the brown irises softly hypnotic. Cheekbones. Lips. He looked away quickly, angling his glasses so they blocked the stranger's face, focusing instead on Zoe. "I'm… I don't know how he got loose. Maybe the spring in the lead clip's bad – I was, ah, she was limping, so I picked her up a-and then he got away from me."

"It appears she stepped on a sliver of glass." The sound of his accented voice made Will look at his face again. Eyes. Dangerously distracting. "I've removed it, but the wound needs to be disinfected and covered."

"Are you a veterinarian?" Will blurted incredulously.

"If you consider humans part of the animal world. I was a trauma surgeon for several years."

"Oh." Will took a breath and ran his hand across the back of his neck, damp with the sweat of his exertions. "I'll, uh, get that taken care of. Th-thanks."

"She's been a wonderful patient. Haven't you?" Zoe licked the man's rounded chin again with a snaggle-toothed smile.

"I'll, um… have to get her in to the vet. Just moved to the area, so, ah… haven't, um… do you know any good ones?"

"I'm afraid I don't keep any pets."

"But you're so good with them," Will blurted out what his empathy pulse told him, watching the stranger cradling Zoe just so, taming her in a matter of seconds.

"My schedule doesn't allow for it."

"At the hospital a lot?"

"I've left that chapter of my career behind. I have a private psychiatry practice."

Will grimaced, and it must have been visible, because the stranger chuckled. "Not fond of therapists." Not a question.

"Therapy doesn't work on me."

"Good to know. Saves me a business card."

Will's smile came like the stranger had conjured it from nothing, master of the dark arts. "I should, ah…" He motioned to the dog in the man's arms.

"Why don't you walk the others and I'll keep her off the ground?"

"Your suit, though…" The ends of Buster and Jack's leashes were sweaty in his hand all the sudden.

"Has succumbed to its fate, I'm afraid. If you'd take my briefcase?"

Will put both leashes in one hand, and picked up the briefcase, tucking it under his arm, then adjusting his grip on everything. "Car's not too far," he promised.

Somehow, they were talking. And walking slowly, each of them aware, Will thought, that they were prolonging the interaction. It was easier to talk when he didn't have to think about making or not making eye contact. The man had done his residency at Johns Hopkins, and came overseas in his twenties, having spent most of his formative years in Paris. Any further back than that, he didn't mention, and Will didn't pry, though he could tell the accent wasn't entirely French.

And Will revealed himself as well, in slow increments, like peeling the petals from a flower, a tightly wrapped rose or a soft, fragrant peony. NOPD, University of Florida, entomology fieldwork. Will expected people to be disturbed by his research on insect activity on decaying bodies, but somehow knew this man wouldn't be. In fact, he was genuine and curious, and captivated when Will told him about his new teaching position at Quantico. The stranger had a way about him that went beyond holding Will's frail little dog so gently. There was a kind of kinship that flowed between them like a vein of precious ore beneath the surface, waiting to be discovered if they dared to delve into the earth to claim it.

Will's empathy pulse swung directly to the man in the suit like a dowsing rod. There was more to him than met the eye, and Will sensed that he, too, was hungry for a connection, was just as lonely because he was unique. The difference was that he didn't wear it on his sleeve like Will did, engaging instead in an elaborate masquerade that was almost more tragic.

Will wanted to understand him and be understood. The desire was so strong it frightened him.

At last, Will spotted his Volvo. The sight made his heart heavy with a sweet, unfamiliar ache. Longing. The taste of connection was delicate but heady, intoxicating, borderline euphoric. But he unlocked the car and got Buster and Jack in the backseat.

He glanced down at the mud smear on the man's thigh. "I, uh… I ought to, um, pay for the dry cleaning."

"I wouldn't dream of it."

"No, no, i-it's my fault." Will pulled his wallet out of his jeans pocket and found a crumpled-up receipt from the pet store and retrieved a pen from the cup holder of his car. He jotted down his address and phone number. "Just, ah… send me the bill, all right?"

They traded Zoe for the receipt. “You’ll hear from me,” the man promised. “If only to hear how she’s faring.”

“She’ll be fine. She’s a tough old girl, aren’t you?” Will chuckled as Zoe licked his chin. “Thanks.”

The man smoothed down his tie and swiped helplessly at the dog hair before picking up his briefcase. “And if I were to post the bill, what name shall I put on the envelope?”

“Shit, I never – Will. It’s Will Graham, sorry.”

“And?” The man nodded to the dog in his arms.

“Zoe,” Will said, looking at the injured paw again to avoid eye contact.

“Goodbye, Zoe, and try to watch where you step.” The man reached out a long-fingered hand and closed it over her uninjured paw, shaking it gently. “Dr. Hannibal Lecter, by the way. Get well soon.”

"These Are Your Notes On Me"

4/4/12

William James Graham. 36 years old, single, resides at 2944 Georgetown Pike, Wolf Trap, Virginia. Silver Volvo XC70 plate number 293-IKT. Five dogs (Zoe, Buster, Jack, Ellie, Harley). Greenville Senior High School, Greenville, South Carolina 1993. BA Criminal Justice and Criminal Psychology (double major) University of Georgia.

New Orleans Police Department 1998-2006 (homicide 2003). MA Entomology (forensics focus) University of Florida 2007-2009. *Insect Activity as an Indicator of Time of Death* – Tescore University Press, 2010. FBI Academy 2010-2011 - no record of program completion. Possible fieldwork. Teaching position at Quantico – forensics and criminal profiling Fall 2011-present.

4/12/12

5:03 pm – Telephoned. Sent to voicemail. No message left.

6:07 pm - Telephoned. Rang through to voicemail. No message left.

4/13/12

3:42 pm - Telephoned. Answered. Inquired regarding dog's foot pad injury (Zoe). Full recovery. Mr. Graham offered again to pay the dry-cleaning bill. Declined, of course.

4/29/12

4:01 pm - Telephoned. Answered after two rings. Reported my lunch date tomorrow with Dr. Anderson of the Sentara Heart and Vascular Center in Woodbridge, and suggested coffee after. Declined. Hung up before I could propose another date.

4:17 pm - Mr. Graham telephoned and accepted.

4/30/12

Coffee (Peet, Stafford VA) 1:02 pm - 4:53 pm.

Detailed notes in volume 395 (3rd shelf, west corner bookcase)

5/3/12

2:43 pm – Telephoned. Reported my appointment with Billy's Sharpening Service (Dumfries, VA) and repeated invitation to coffee. Accepted.

Peets again. Dinner Bistro L'Hermitage, Woodbridge, VA. See 395 for notes.

5/13/12

8:32 pm - Text messages received.

5/14/12

Text messages received throughout the day (preferred communication for Mr. Graham).

5/16/12

Correspondence continued throughout the day.

5/21/12

9:29 pm - Mr. Graham accepted my invitation to cook for him.

5/30/12

Dinner with Mr. Graham. Served Mr. Florscheim in osso buco.

6/3/12

Text correspondence more frequent. Invitation to Mr. Graham's home to visit the dogs.

6/5/12

8:29 pm - Telephoned. Hesitant to talk at first but stayed on the line until 10:43 pm.

6/10/12

7:02 pm - Mr. Graham telephoned me “just to talk.”

6/14/12

Confirmation of bisexuality – mention of college acquaintance and alluded to several sexual encounters that were kept secret from both of their families and social circles.

6/19/12

Canceled 5:45 pm appointment with Mr. Froideveaux as Will’s texts were becoming more anxious and erratic. Telephoned several times but no answer, though more text messages were sent. Picked up at 7:29 pm. Panic attack regarding order by superiors to engage in field work.

6/28/12

Texted to let me know he’d be in the field today. Intermittent texts throughout.

Mr. Graham – whom I shall now refer consistently to as Will in this record – arrived at my home at 9:29 pm in a state of emotional distress. Fieldwork - Marlowe murders. Hadn’t eaten. Requested toast. Finished. Accepted offer of wine. One glass. Requested “something stronger.” Served Hakushu Japanese whiskey. Consumed roughly 6 oz. Accepted offer to stay the night. Slept in the north-facing guest bedroom. Sleep was disturbed several times by what appeared to be dream-related anxiety. Was gone when I woke up at 5:30am but left a note.

7/1/12

Coffee, Bread Me, Quantico VA.

7/3/12

Dinner, Bistro L’Hermitage, Woodbridge, VA.

7/4/12

Rented FLOHOM 1 Bay Escape houseboat at the marina for the fireworks show. Cushioned by Arts Council acquaintances and friends of the Komedas. Served Ms. Wellsworth and Mr. Vasquez in hors d'oeuvres.

Will again over-imbibed as a social lubricant and was consequently invited to stay the night. Purposely did not inform him that the sofa folded out. Less resistance than expected to sleeping in the same bed. Much less resistance than expected to touch.

7/5/12

Served breakfast. Expected him to eat and leave. Expressed fatigue, went back to bed, and slept for another two hours. 12:02 pm shower. I entered the bedroom 15 minutes after shower completion to offer coffee or a light lunch. Counteroffer was a kiss. Fellatio followed.

7/8/12

Mutual masturbation.

7/10/12

Fellatio.

7/11/12

Fellatio and intercrural sex

7/14/12

Frottage.

7/18/12

Frottage and intercrural. Fellatio later.

7/20/12

Fellatio and anal fingering.

7/23/12

Fellatio and anal fingering, light rope bondage, blindfold.

7/25/12

Handcuffs, anal fingering, anal penetration (me)

7/28/12

Fellatio, anal fingering, anal penetration (me)

7/29/12

Fellatio and frottage, light rope bondage, blindfold, ball gag.

8/2/12

Will arrived 10:29 pm (directly from Salvatore crime scene). Experiencing distress related to empathy use in profiling. Fellatio, anal fingering, anal penetration (Will). Frottage in the morning, then breakfast (Mr. Yates)

8/7/12

Hogtie restraints. Anal fingering, anal penetration (Will), frontal stimulation in tandem. "Pillow talk" discussion re: how to define our relationship. Will requested complete discretion.

I felt There were My understanding Request received. See complete file for notes and journal 23 for personal response.

8/30/12

I received fellatio and analingus with no expectation of reciprocation.

9/4/12

Fellatio, analingus, penetration (Will) and then the reverse.

9/13/12

Experiment in intercrural making use of different areas of the body to provide stimulation. Will enjoyed use of my pectoral muscles though I preferred the gluteus maximus.

9/14/12

Demonstration: knots used in boating and fishing, transferable skill re: bondage. Fellatio, analingus, penetration (me).

9/29/12

Disagreement re: marks left on the body. Opera tonight with Mrs. Komeda will have to be postponed and Will took a day of sick leave. New rules instituted re: biting, suck bruises for both of us.

10/4/12

Dessert interrupted by intercourse. Note to self – check dining room table screws/bolts and tighten if needed. Frottage.

10/31/12

First instance of sexual roleplay incorporating various Samhain/Halloween props. Successful implementation of prostate massager (Will). Penetration (Will). Fellatio (Will).

11/1/12

Intercrural sex. Last-minute decision to take leave. Cabin in West Virginia on ranch property. All dogs in attendance. Fellatio (both) upon arrival. Dinner prepared onsite over cookfire (Mr. Lammers)

11/2/12

Extended prostate massage (Will) while wearing vibrating plug (me). Penetration (Will) followed by reverse.

11/3/12

Experiments in temperature play re: ice, candle wax. Fellatio, intercrural sex.

11/4/12

Excursion to the woods cut short due to rain. Experiment in salirophilia on return trip re: muddy trail. Frottage.

11/17/12

Rough sex, despite previous discussions. Consensual "forced" fellatio (Will received) and masturbation. Frustration resulting from Marlowe case (ongoing).

12/2/12

Will's early Christmas gift to me: a sujihiki knife. Experiments in bondage and edgeplay, penetration, fellatio. Blood flavor an unexpected delight.

12/15/12

My gift to Will arrived. Adopted dog from shelter. Bought shelter (mismanaged) in the process; turned management over to nonprofit consulting firm. Construction on new kennel begins when the ground thaws. Will has named him Max. Intercrural (both).

During the act, Will expressed himself using the word 'love.' After, discussion re: secrecy.

12/31/12

First contact since discussion. Inevitably, he appeared at the door after imbibing.

After a certain amount of time on his knees he was admitted to the bedroom and further expressed apology through fellatio.

1/1/13

Fellatio and penetration (both)

1/6/13

Clandestine frottage in the Bentley between Mr. Froidiveaux's appointment and Mrs. Cervantes'.

1/29/13

Clandestine meeting at Baltimore International Film Festival during screening of *Haute Cuisine.* Mutual masturbation.

2/14/13

Disagreement re: Valentine's day. Did not prevent use of gifted massage oils. Frottage, intercrural.

2/15/12

Resumed disagreement re: relationship definition.

2/20/13

Mutual silent agreement made to pretend as though argument disagreement never occurred. Shower together ended with fellatio (Will) and intercrural sex.

2/21/13

Still ignoring disagreement. Interesting experiment in Will's empathy. Blindfolds and wax play. Frottage, penetration.

2/22/13

Hogtie restraints (me). Mutual masturbation, penetration (me).

3/10/13

9:39 am – Dr. Alana Bloom telephoned to say she'd been contacted by Jack Crawford, director of the Behavioral Science Unit at Quantico. He'd asked her to work with Will and keep tabs on his mental state during his ongoing investigations but declined the offer due to self-described "professional interest" which is likely sexual attraction.

She informed me Jack plans to reach out to Will regarding the disappearances of several young women around the Midwest, and would I take her place?

I'm curious what will happen.

3/15/13

Dinner (Miss Fields – pate as appetizer). Valentine's Day massage oils pay a visit. Intercrural, frottage, mutual masturbation. Did not mention Dr. Bloom's call.

3/21/13

Sexual contact limited tonight. Interesting presentation of vulnerability post crime scene continues to offer insights. Requested only to be held.

3/30/13

Unannounced visit today from Jack Crawford. A worthy opponent. I had some concern he'd discovered me. He formally requested that I act as Will's guide as he uses his empathy to profile killers. Mentioned that Will is not "keen" on being analyzed. I suggested he allow my presence at the first meeting be veiled until the time itself. Meeting (or ambush) set for April 4th 10:30 am in Agent Crawford's office.

4/4/13

Meeting today 10:30 am Quantico, Behavioral Science Unit. Will has made no indication that he knows I will be in attendance. I am curious what will happen.

Meat Cute

If Jack notices that Will makes eye contact with me – an anomaly for an alleged first meeting, to be sure – he makes no indication. If he notices my smile is laced with a petty sort of satisfaction — one that says, perhaps, *this is what happens when you refuse to acknowledge what we mean to one another* — he again masks any sign. I'm surprised at myself. Up until this moment I hadn't realized I was harboring resentment regarding Will's insistence on discretion. Keeping our affair a secret has benefited me in several ways, the least of which is ensuring I wouldn't be a suspect, should Will disappear or be found in another of the Ripper's tableaus.

But I do resent it, with a strength that borders on fury.

I slam that particular door in my mind and force my heartrate back into a comfortable zone, chastising myself. This meeting is the culmination of what began a year ago on this day. I am now a friend of the FBI and privy to its secrets. Jack already said he'd show me the Chesapeake Ripper's file, a scrapbook of my treasured memories.

"Will Graham. Meet Dr. Hannibal Lecter. He's a friend of Alana Bloom's. I asked him to join us today to look at this case – add another layer of insight."

Will strips off his jacket, tossing it on one of Jack's office chairs near the door. He fiddles with the collar of his shirt, deliberately not looking at me. How I long to see him in something that fits him well and wasn't selected from Lands' End or Eddie Bauer. His figure would be devastating in tailored trousers. Jack glances at me apologetically with a miniscule shrug. *Don't say I didn't warn you.*

Jack's administrative assistant pops his head in. "Mr. Graham, can I get you a coffee?"

Black, with two sugar packets.

"Black," Will says over his shoulder as he pauses in front of the board Jack's assembled, surveying the bland faces of the victims. I'm sure they all would have made lovely real estate agents or business majors. "Sugar. Two of 'em."

The assistant returns with an ebony mug, placing it on the front of Jack's desk in reaching distance from the empty chair that Will must soon occupy. Across from Jack and right next to me. As Jack begins the meeting, he takes the seat reluctantly after a time, unable to avoid proximity any longer. "I've filled Dr. Lecter in on the details, and your observations at the Nichols house. We were just getting to all the false confessions coming into the tip lines."

"Maladjusted teens and the mentally ill," Will grunts, emptying sugar packets into his mug and stirring them with the red plastic stick provided. "Influenced by the media coverage."

I get to my feet just to pass behind him, get a lungful of his scent, clean and crisp like the woods around his home, carrying soft traces of his dogs and the remnants of engine grease under his fingernails. Delicious, now that I've gotten him to stop wearing that abominable

aftershave. I lean toward the board, Jack at my side; I pretend to study the map and its connecting lines. I can feel Will's eyes on me, burning into me with the heat of agonized betrayal. I've certainly knocked him off balance – good. "Tell me then, how many confessions?"

"Twelve dozen, last time I checked. None of them knew the details. Until this morning. Then everyone knew the details." Jack resumes his seat. I stand at the board, looking at him, feeling the waves of irritation as they roll off Will like smoke. "Some genius in Duluth PD took a picture of Elise Nichols' body with their phone and shared it with their friends. Then Freddie Lounds ran it on Tattlecrime.com."

"Tasteless," Will mutters half under his breath. He might mean Ms. Lounds' journalism practices, but I think he's referring to my surprise appearance at his place of work. Again, I feel the base satisfaction of having rattled him. Forcing him to reap what he's sown, give him a taste of what I've endured — his own shame and discomfort transferring to me by proxy when he insisted we keep our affections secret, hiding them like our relationship was something rotten that needed to be buried, decomposing out of sight, out of mind.

"Do you have trouble with taste?" I ask, softly benign. My therapy voice. Will hates it.

"My thoughts are often not *tasty* ." I do love watching him squirm. But my enjoyment is clouded by sudden images of comforting Will in the wake of his bloody investigations, holding him through his suffering, waking him when I knew he was having nightmares so vivid they dampened our sheets with terror sweat.

"Nor mine. No effective barriers." He knows this. I told him about Mischa. He's the first person I've told, save Bedelia du Maurier. He doesn't know that I ate her but understands how she was taken from me.

"I make forts."

"Associations come quickly," I say. This may appear to Jack like some brilliant on-the-spot psychoanalysis, but I know because Will's told me his traumas in return.

"So do forts," he insists, looking down into the sweet blackness of his coffee cup with a petulant little turn to his lip.

I continue to twist the knife. "Not fond of eye contact, are you?

Will turns to me. "Eyes are distracting. You see too much. You don't see *enough* ." As in, he's scolding himself for not anticipating I'd do something like this. He looks directly at me now. "And it's hard to focus when you're thinking *those whites are really white* or *they must have hepatitis, or is that a burst vein?* " Cheeky, yes, but also a jab – I did burst a vein in my left eye during our time at the cabin on the ranch in West Virginia due to a particularly powerful orgasm. He chided me then for my vanity as I lamented the bloody speck marring my sclera.

I smile. It's a lovely memory.

“So, yeah… I try to avoid eyes whenever possible,” Will finishes, returning me to the present moment. “Jack?” He calls the director over as he opens a case file and thumbs through an autopsy report.

Undeterred, I continue, even though we have a charade to maintain. “I imagine what you see and learn touches everything else in your mind. Your values and decency are present yet shocked at your associations, appalled at your dreams. No forts in the bone arena of your skull for things you love.”

Jack nods, impressed, and I see the connection form in Will’s mind. I’ve just described him to a letter, and now he knows that’s why I’m here. “Whose profile are you working on?” He snaps. I do not answer, so he directs the same question to Jack. “Whose profile is he working on?”

I temper my delight to keep Jack in the dark. “I’m sorry, Will. Observing is what we do. I can’t shut mine off any more than you can shut yours off.”

“Don’t psychoanalyze me,” he warns Jack. “You won’t like me when I’m psychoanalyzed.” He gets hastily to his feet and flees the chair, grabbing up his coat. “Now if you’ll excuse me, I have to go give a lecture on psychoanalyzing.”

On the way out of the office, he nearly collides with an end table, brushing through the reaching leaves of the potted plant perched on top with enough force to slide the bottom of the pot against the surface. He makes his way with awkward haste through the door and disappears.

I’d say this meeting was a success.

“Maybe we shouldn’t poke him like that, Doctor. Perhaps, ah…” Jack makes a subtle hand gesture as I think to myself, *I’ve poked him more than you know* . “A less direct approach. We don’t want those *Get Smart* doors closing on us.”

I have no idea what this means, so I change the subject. “During intense conversations, does he adopt your cadence of speech?” Will has started to moan the same way I do in bed.

Jack’s brows climb his face. He’s noticed it, too. Not the moaning, of course, but Will’s parroting. “I thought it was a gimmick to get the back-and-forth going. Like mirroring someone’s body language to get them to trust you.”

I rise from my chair, abandoning the terrible coffee Jack’s assistant brought me when I arrived. Another sip and I won’t be able to conceal my disgust. Studying the map on the board, I can clandestinely scrape my tongue against the roof of my mouth and swallow the last of the bitterness away. Then I think of Will’s cup he left behind, and I want to drink from it – to taste the sweetness of the sugar he likes, mixed with the remnants of his mouth left on the rim. “It’s involuntary. He couldn’t stop himself if he tried.”

Jack makes a little grunt of agreement. I return to my seat. “What he has is pure empathy. And projection. He can assume your point of view, or mine – and maybe some other points of

view that scare him. It's an uncomfortable gift, Jack. Perception's a tool that's pointed on both ends."

Jack nods as if he understands, and we both turn our gaze back to the milquetoast faces on the board surrounding the map. "This cannibal you have him getting to know," I say, relishing the moment of double meaning, mentally licking my lips. "I think I can help good Will see his face."

"The Adventure Today Wil Be Yours and Mine"

All the strength left Will's body as soon as the door to the motel room clicked shut behind him. He sagged against it for a moment, feeling like a marionette with limp strings. Forcing himself upright, he took off his jacket and tossed it on the cheap wooden chair that sat at the scratched table and kicked off his shoes. When he tossed the satchel on the other bed, the one he didn't plan to sleep in, it landed with an ominous thud, heavy with Cassie Boyle's file.

Against his will, images of the impaled corpse came back to him. She was both the table itself *and* the feast spread out upon it, the crows arriving as dinner guests dressed for a funeral. Down South, after the funeral mass, the mourners gathered for the wake, devouring the casseroles and chicken salad sandwiches, banana pudding and the ever-present pan of hash browns and sour cream baked together. Funeral potatoes, Aunt Louise had always called them.

The carrion birds had descended upon Cassie Boyle's wake, where she was both the deceased and the feast.

For some reason, it made him think of Hannibal.

Hannibal .

Will pulled his phone out of his pants pocket, collapsing onto the other bed, groaning softly as a bent spring in the shitty mattress attacked his lumbar region. He had 17 unread text messages and four missed calls. One voicemail. The notifications bloomed the ghost of a smile across his face. Hannibal *never* left a voicemail. Must be getting desperate.

They hadn't spoken since the meeting in Jack's office. Will decided to let Hannibal suffer for another night. Maybe he'd think about answering in the morning.

Depended on his dreams. Because as furious as the little ambush at Quantico had made him, Will realized that he missed Hannibal. Needed him, especially now, when his thoughts were particularly *untasty.*

A series of knocks on his motel room door drew Will away from his nightmare, the staccato sounds folding over him protectively like an angel's wing. In the dream, he'd been seated at the table provided by the girl's body, the crows sitting on his shoulders and outstretched arms, feeding him bits of her flesh as if he was their hatchling.

He got up, stumbling through the dark, and opened the door, squinting in the delicate morning light. The chill cut through his thin tee-shirt and boxers, waking him fully to behold who stood at the threshold.

Hannibal. It took everything Will had not to throw his arms around his lover's neck.

"Good morning, Will. May I come in?"

Will hesitated, keeping his face bleary and annoyed, glancing over Hannibal's shoulder, making sure none of the other BSU agents were out in the parking lot or peeking out their room doors. "Where's Crawford?"

"Deposed in court. The adventure will be yours and mine today. May I come in?"

Will noticed the thermal bag hanging by its strap from Hannibal's arm. Food, of course. Will backed up and let him in, then shut the door and edged the curtains closed where they gapped a one-inch crack.

Hannibal set down the bag on the table and turned on one of the bedside lamps, filling the shabby motel room with dingy light. Apparently, he'd thought the usual three-piece a little much for Minnesota and was instead wearing slacks, a white dress shirt, and a dark brown sport coat.

"What the hell are you doing here?" Will demanded brusquely as Hannibal opened the thermal bag, removing Tupperware and filling the room with the delicious smell of meat and scrambled eggs.

"Jack had to fly back to Washington early this morning, and he asked me to come out in his stead. Keep an eye on you." Hannibal's eyes were definitely on Will now, hungry and dark, pupils blown wide. Ravenous. Will knew that look. "I arrived late last night."

"And somehow, you, ah… found a way to make a home-cooked fucking breakfast," Will retorted. "No, stop–!" He grabbed Hannibal by the wrist before he could unlatch the lid on the Tupperware.

"I thought I'd save you from the continental breakfast here."

"Oh, really? Not to-to *apologize* for showing up in my boss's office a-and agreeing to *psychoanalyze* me for the FBI?" Will let him go and paced the small room, hands gripping himself by the hair for a moment.

"Why would I apologize?" Hannibal asked coolly, though he did abandon the breakfast. "When Jack approached me, how was I to respond? Should I have told him about us? Detailed the conflict of interest?"

"No," Will retorted, crossing his arms. "But you didn't have to say yes. Coulda told him… anything. You're too busy o-or you don't wanna look at crime scenes… Obviously you're a good enough *liar* ."

"I agreed so that you might see the consequences of your actions."

"My actions?" Will shook his head. "W-what actions?"

"Dr. Bloom recommended me to Jack Crawford because she was unaware of our relationship. Jack Crawford agreed and contacted me because *he* was unaware of our relationship."

Will stared at him, incredulous, for a long beat. "You're still upset about keeping it a secret? I-I thought we agreed it was for the best!"

“For *your* best, Will.” This said softly in the cadence of hurt. “Are you so ashamed of me?”

“What? No, no, no, no, n-no, of course I’m not… *ashamed* of you.” Will went to him now, raised his hands to place them on Hannibal’s shoulders before balking and thinking better of it. “I told you, I… come from a very conservative, ah… family.”

“A family you never see and rarely speak to. Should their judgment carry so much weight?”

“I…” Will sighed, a harsh exhale, shaking his head. “Look, I can’t have another… *thing* . The empathy, the way I solve crimes. The-the difficulty with eye contact, the social… whatever, the s- *seven* dogs, the borderline thing with the autism and the anxiety and… I can’t be all that *and* a ... ” He bit back the word he wanted to say, the one his uncle Remi often used, and finished with, “be queer, too, on top of everything else.”

The room was silent, save the hum of the rattling HVAC, the room heavy with what Will had just confessed.

“Will,” Hannibal said, his name four letters of caress. “There is nothing wrong with you. You are not damaged or defective.”

“Tell that to everyone else.” He pinched the bridge of his nose, then glanced back at Hannibal. The empathy pulse swung across his vision, a delicate sweep that revealed so much. His face… he *was* upset. Hurt. Not just wounded pride, no… there was an ache there that Will had never picked up on before. A desperate, primal, childlike fear of rejection, of withheld affection, of intimacy dangled and then snatched away.

Will went to him now, slowly sliding a hand around his waist, the other cupping his cheek, feeling the gorgeous bone structure beneath the smooth, fragrant skin. “I didn’t realize,” he murmured. “H-how much…” He took a breath and tried again. “When I said it, *you didn’t say it back* .”

“I couldn’t.” Hannibal’s dark eyes swam with tears. “I was afraid. Forgive me.”

“Can you–?”

“I love you,” Hannibal interrupted. Rude, but it opened Will’s heart, a bud unfurling in spring.

“I’m sorry. I was so blind.”

Hannibal smiled his forgiveness, leaning in to kiss Will’s forehead tenderly. “I worked very hard to blind you,” he murmured, drifting his mouth down to catch Will’s lips in a proper kiss.

Will locked their bodies together, twisting his hand into Hannibal’s hair, devouring, and being devoured. He pawed at Hannibal’s belt, working it open clumsily as Hannibal’s hands locked on his arms above the elbow, going after his neck, kissing, sucking, biting. “Tell me what you want, Will,” he whispered, breath fanning against the shell of Will’s ear.

“I don’t care what anybody thinks, I don’t care, I don’t fucking care anymore,” Will insisted breathlessly, a chanted litany, tugging at Hannibal’s trousers so that they slid half off, groping him through his black undergarment, eliciting a moan from those aristocratic lips.

“The truth, then – that we belong solely to each other – whatever the consequences?” Hannibal snagged a handful of Will’s tee shirt, balling it into his fist and using it to push him back on the rumpled motel bed. “You trust me that much?”

Will nodded, squirming back on his elbows, beckoning. Hannibal tossed off his jacket and kicked off his shoes, crawling up from the end of the bed and caressing Will’s calves on his way, parting and fondling his thighs, dragging his tongue along their inner tenderness. “That’s all I want,” he insisted breathily as Hannibal nosed against his cock through his blue boxers.

“Very well.” Hannibal’s smile was wide and genuine, showing a glint of teeth, a rare occasion. He set about claiming Will, then, with unbridled enthusiasm, sucking his cock for a bit before diving in further, devouring his ass before slipping a spit-wet finger in. “Did you happen to pack any–”

“No,” Will said through a hitched sigh, clutching the pillow behind his head. “I don’t care, just…”

“Prepare yourself, please,” Hannibal requested with velvet politeness. He slid off the end of the bed and took off his clothes, his eyes never leaving Will, who slipped his fingers between his lips, wetting them lasciviously with his tongue and withdrawing them slowly. He worked his first two into himself, stroking his cock every so often with his free hand.

“For someone who so detests eye contact…” Hannibal began, bending to peel off his sock.

“Yeah, but you don’t,” Will said, thumbing his slit and slicking down a bead of precum, then biting his lip as he wormed another finger into his hole.

“Especially like this.” Hannibal slid onto the cheap duvet next to him and replaced the hand on Will’s cock with his mouth for a brief visit, stroking himself and fingering Will’s nipple.

Kneeling between Will’s legs, Hannibal eased them wider, slipping his own generous beads of anticipatory moisture down his shaft before slowly drawing Will’s fingers out of his opening. “I’ll go slowly.”

Will nodded, tightening his legs around Hannibal’s hips eagerly. Hannibal pressed the thick crown of his cock against his hole, circling it a few times to wet it further, then pushed it in. Will snared Hannibal in his arms, fingers biting into the flesh of his back as Hannibal breached him slowly. It hurt, being splayed open, but it was remarkably easy to breathe through and ignore. Worth it, to have someone inside of him, someone so deeply connected now physically as well as in every other way. Hannibal was deep within him. He’d been a fool to think otherwise, that he could turn away from the introduction of being so utterly possessed.

“Will?” His name was a puff of warm air against his neck.

“I’m okay,” Will panted, stroking the back of his neck. “I’m okay, just, ah… don’t move.”

“Will…”

“No, n-no, no l-let me just… feel you.”

Hannibal rolled on his side in increments, drawing Will in close, then onto his back, sitting Will on his lap. Will gasped as he sank down on Hannibal’s cock in its entirety.

Will took a shuddering breath, running his hands through Hannibal’s chest hair, sweat dripping from his forehead and disappearing into the curls. Hannibal stroked up and down his thighs, curling his hands around Will’s ass, then working Will’s cock through his fist.

Will tensed his legs and began to move. Hannibal assisted, holding him by the hips, uttering ever louder grunts and growls of satisfaction. The splitting pain dulled, slowly replacing itself with a delicious fullness. Will closed Hannibal’s hand over his cock again and squeezed; his orgasm ripped out of him in a sudden flood, spilling over their knuckles.

Will found himself on his back now as Hannibal fucked him, hard and fast, conjuring harsh cries and post-orgasmic squirming until Will felt the burn of his seed and the pressure of being clasped to Hannibal’s body with such force.

They lay in hard breathing quiet for a long time before Hannibal rolled over onto Will and kissed him ardently, stroking his sweaty curls.

“I have something I need to tell you,” Will said.

Hannibal raised a pale brow.

“I stole a dog. Well, I found him and didn’t, ah… really try to find his owner. His name’s Winston.”

Hannibal chuckled, softly loving. “I thought you said *seven* .” He pressed a kiss against Will’s throat, nipping under his chin. “I have something to confess as well.”

“What is it?”

Hannibal sat up with a soft, satisfied groan, pulling Will gently with him. “We’ll discuss it another time.” He lifted Will’s hand to his lips and kissed his knuckles in an adorable, courtly gesture. “Eat your breakfast.”

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